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COMPLETE WITHDRAWAL OF FOREIGN MILITARY FORCES FROM THE TERRITORIES OF THE BALTIC STATES

HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS

Letter dated 26 July 1994 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In accordance with instructions, I have the honour to inform you of the following.

On 26 July 1994, the President of the Russian Federation, Mr. Boris Yeltsin, and the President of the Republic of Estonia, Mr. Lennart Meri, held a working meeting. During a detailed discussion, they considered key issues in Russian-Estonian relations, in particular those relating to the withdrawal of troops, the fate of retired military personnel and the situation of the Russian-speaking population.

Following complicated negotiations that lasted for four hours, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the two parties arrived at mutually acceptable solutions that enabled the Presidents to adopt an appropriate political decision and sign the Treaty on Troop Withdrawal and the Agreement on Social Guarantees for Retired Russian Military Personnel. With respect to the Russian Federation's naval training centre in Paldiski, they decided to finalize an agreement on the issue, which would be signed on 27 July 1994.

The signing of the package of military agreements by the two Presidents constitutes a breakthrough in this area. As a result, the military aspect of relations with Estonia has been resolved. A final date for the withdrawal of troops has been fixed: 31 August 1994. The Treaty contains a number of

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provisions that are of fundamental importance to the Russian Federation: the status of the withdrawing troops has been established and a "zero option" has been agreed with respect to reciprocal financial claims (including claims regarding property being left behind and claims for environmental damages); in addition, it was decided that members of families of military personnel would be able to remain in Estonia for up to a year after the troop withdrawal, which should make it possible to solve a number of problems relating to the resettlement of the departing troops in the Russian Federation. The Agreement on Social Guarantees for Retired Military Personnel is of key importance. In accordance with the Agreement, retired military personnel, members of their families and persons who have lost their breadwinners receive - at their own request - permits to reside in Estonia; this excludes persons who, by a decision of the Estonian Government, have for good reason been refused a residence permit, on the grounds that they pose a threat to the security of Estonia. The Agreement also provides for the participation of representatives of the Commonwealth of Independent States in the work of the governmental commission that recommends the issuance of residence permits.

The talks were held in a frank atmosphere and were characterized by a desire to reach agreement and thereby lay the groundwork for real progress in other areas of Russian-Estonian relations.

The outcome of the meeting was the result of a difficult mutual compromise. Attention should now be focused on the fundamental importance of ensuring that Estonia observes general European human rights norms.

In our relations with Estonia, our principal concern now is the situation of the Russian-speaking population living in that country.

The Russian Federation has taken into consideration the views expressed earlier in the United Nations concerning the withdrawal of its troops from Estonia, and now expects that the same kind of close and undivided attention will be paid to its concerns in the humanitarian field.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter circulated as an official document of the General Assembly under items 26 and 103 of the provisional agenda.

(Signed) Y. VORONTSOV